

WATER STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Priority Area: Develop and implement a water trails system

The Water Strategy includes a recommendation to further develop and implement a Michigan water trails system. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, in collaboration with the Office of the Great Lakes, is working towards a state water trail designation program. The MDNR and the OGL provide assistance and funding to assist communities, regional initiatives and organizations to create and designate water trails. The goal is to develop and maintain a geographically dispersed, locally supported, sustainable system of water trails that offer a diversity of experiences that become a catalyst for improved recreational opportunity, healthy lifestyles and local prosperity. In addition, the OGL has provided technical assistance as well as funding to state and local partners to support water trail promotion, planning, marketing and implementation along Michigan's Great Lakes coastline.

A Michigan water trails system will introduce new and visiting paddlers to this healthy activity with easy-to-understand information on access points, necessary skill level, potential hazards, environmental and cultural programming, and clean and interesting community amenities. Community support is a necessary ingredient for success, and the economic benefits of trails should be a component of any water trail planning and development efforts.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

- The MDNR will release a Draft Policy for State Designated Water Trails and invite public comment to inform development of a final policy on State Water Trail Designations.
- The MDNR will perform outreach to communities, counties and regions to assess existing self-designated water trails for possible inclusion in state designation.
- The MDNR will work with communities, regions and organizations to identify streams and lake segments that would be ideal candidates for state designation and assist local communities, regional initiatives and organizations to create and designate water trails.
- The MDNR will begin to process applications for state water trail designation.
- The MDNR will develop strategies to secure financial resources to implement the emerging water trails program.
- The MDNR will continue work with partnering organizations on the Grand River to complete management agreements and community resolutions of support, to develop a Grand River Water Trail.
- The MDNR and the OGL will continue to provide technical assistance to support water trail planning, marketing, and development along Michigan's waterways and coastline.
- In partnership with Land Information Access Association, the OGL will host a Water Trails Summit and release a Michigan Water Trail Manual in the fall of 2016.

AGENCY CONTACTS:

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